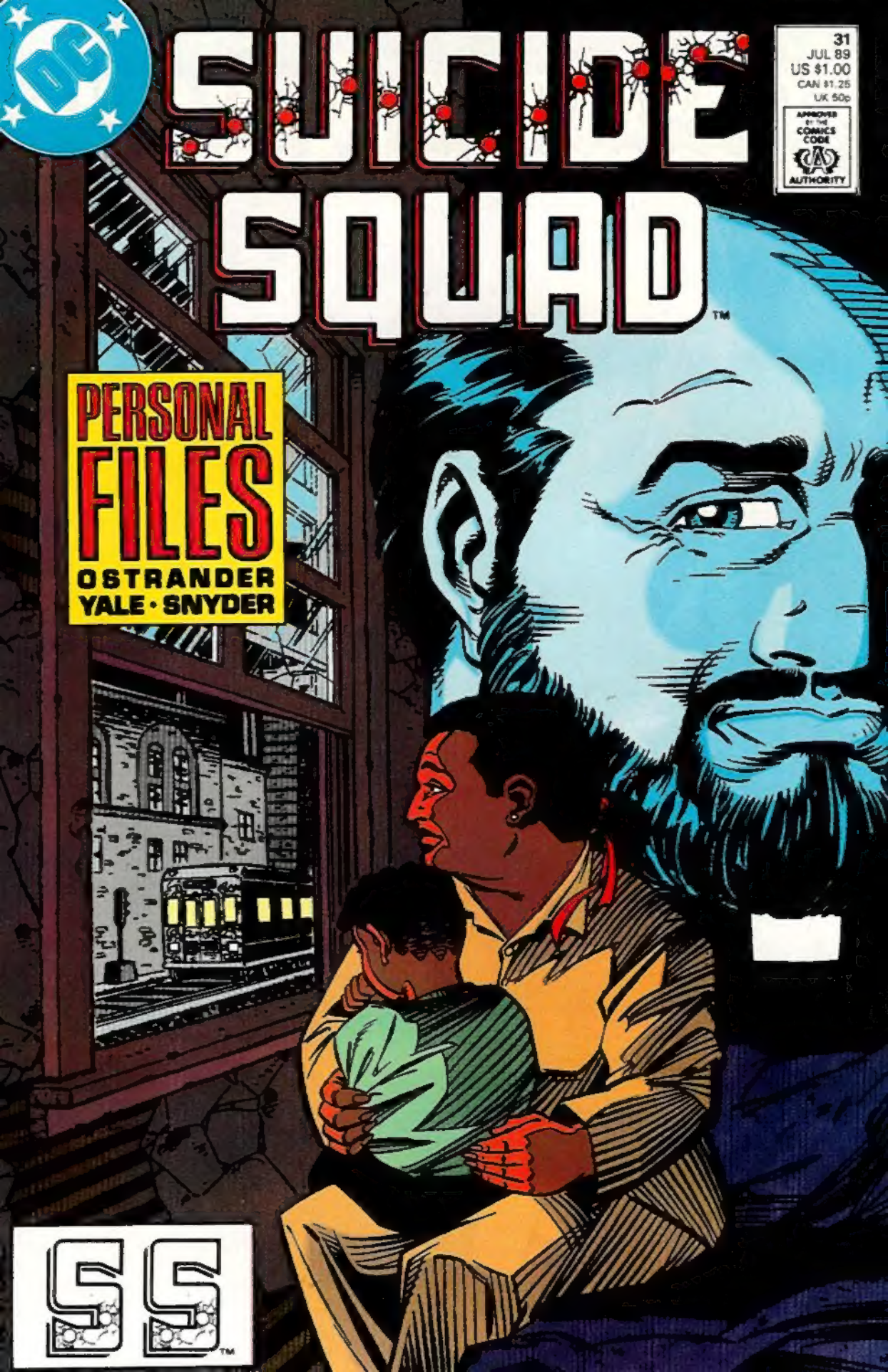

DC
SUICIDE SQUAD
31
JUL 89
US $1.00
CAN $1.25
UK 50p
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
PERSONAL FILES
OSTRANDER
YALE · SNYDER
SS

PERSONAL FILES: FATHER RICHARD CRAEMER

ACTS OF CONTRITION

JOHN OSTRANDER & KIM YALE
WRITERS

JOHN K. SNYDER III
ARTIST

TODD KLEIN
LETTERER

CARL GAFFORD
COLORIST

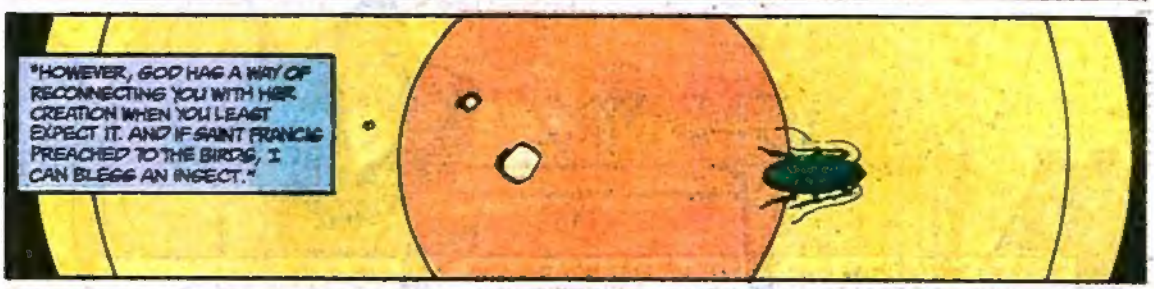
DAN RASPLER
EDITOR

SUICIDE SQUAD 31 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SUICIDE SQUAD, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate $12.00, Canada $17.00, all other foreign $24.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
DC Comics Inc. A Warner Communications Company

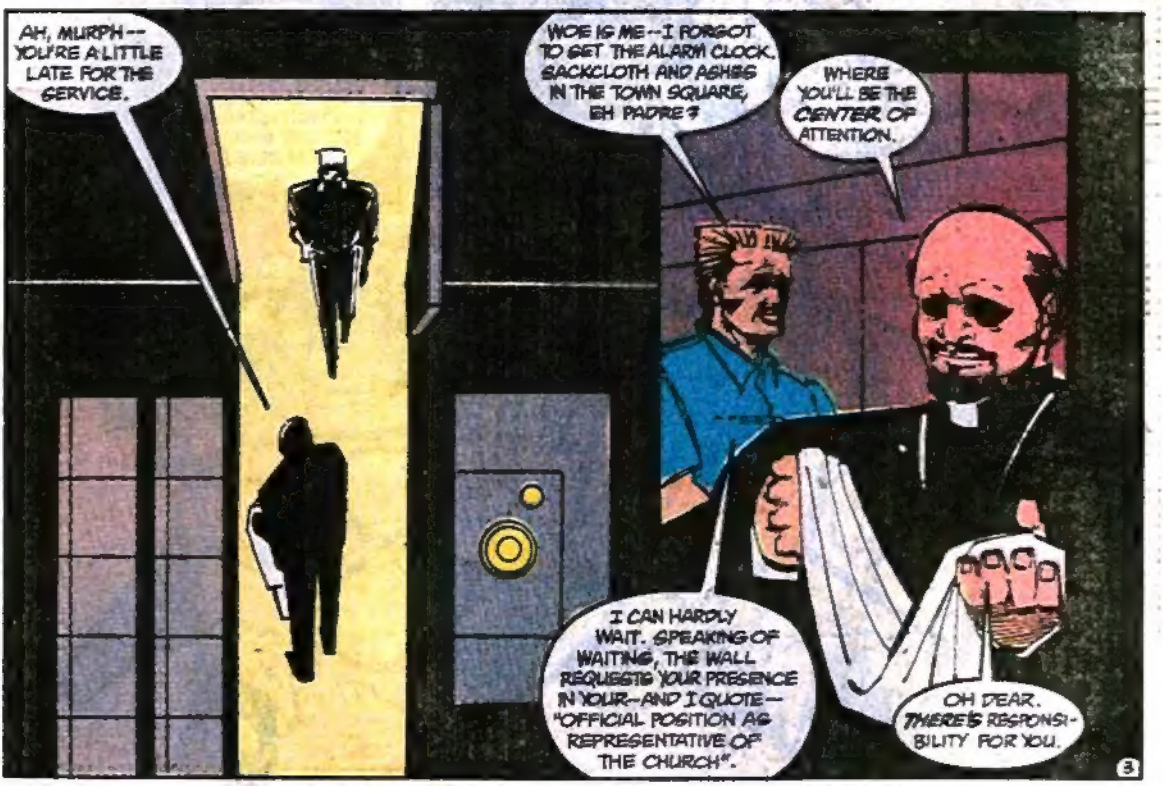
6-48711

"NOT EXACTLY A WILD SUCCESS, THIS MISSION.
STO
ROO

"I MISS EVE--NIGHTSHADE. SINCE SHE'S LEFT BELLE REVE THERE IS NO ONE WILLING TO SHARE THIS BREAD AND CUP WITH ME. AND I HATE CELEBRATING ALONE--I FEEL LIKE I'M SELFISHLY FLAUNTING MY POWER AS A PRIEST.


"HOWEVER, GOD HAS A WAY OF RECONNECTING YOU WITH HER CREATION WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT. AND IF SAINT FRANCIS PREACHED TO THE BIRDS, I CAN BLESS AN INSECT."

GO IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD.


AH, MURPH--YOU'RE A LITTLE LATE FOR THE SERVICE.
WOE IS ME--I FORGOT TO SET THE ALARM CLOCK. SACKCLOTH AND ASHES IN THE TOWN SQUARE, EH PADRE?
WHERE YOU'LL BE THE CENTER OF ATTENTION.
I CAN HARDLY WAIT. SPEAKING OF WAITING, THE WALL REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE IN YOUR--AND I QUOTE--"OFFICIAL POSITION AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHURCH".
OH DEAR. THERE'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOU.

"OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHURCH DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY MEAN AN EXPERT IN COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS. A MAN HAD BEEN ARRESTED WHO SAID THERE WAS A SECRET VOODOO CRIME CARTEL OPERATING IN NEW ORLEANS CALLED THE LOA.
"IN RETURN FOR THIS INFORMATION, SPIRITUAL PROTECTION FOR THIS MAN WAS GUARANTEED. WHAT DID AMANDA EXPECT FROM ME -- AN EXORCISM PERFORMED ON THE SPOT? I FELT OUT OF PLACE AS THE INTERROGATION CONTINUED."
YOU LIE! YOU LIE LIKE A RUG! I INVENTED THE LOA! CAME TO ME IN A DREAM! USED IT TO NAIL BOOMERBUTT AS MIRROR MASTER*! THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING IN REAL LIFE!
NO! NOT PRETEND--THE LOA, THEY WALK IN YOUR DREAMS! THEY WANT YOU TO THINK THEIR EXISTENCE IS MAKE-BELIEVE! THEY HAVE THE POWER AND THEY HAVE USED YOU!
IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE WHAT I SAY, LOOK AT THIS! I STOLE THIS FROM THE HIGH ALTAR! IT IS PROOF WHAT I SAY IS TRUE!
*CHECK OUT ISSUE #20 FOR DETAILS. -- DAN
4

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW-- DROP TO MY KNEES AND SAY "LAWSY LAWSY, HE'P ME, SAVE ME"?! THIS IS NOTHING BUT SUPER-STITIOUS CRAP!
YOU MUST BELIEVE ME! TELL YOUR PRIEST TO PUT ME INTO SANCTUARY-- PROTECT ME FROM THEM! DAMBALLAH WILL LEARN OF MY TREACHERY, AND WHEN HE DOES--
FWOOOSH!
ARRAA AHHGH!

THERE *ARE* THREE OR FOUR KNOWN INCIDENTS OF SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION IN HUMAN BEINGS A YEAR, ACCORDING TO THE INQUIRER. I MEAN, THIS DOESN'T *NECESSARILY* HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH A GROUP CALLED THE *LOA*, WHICH *MAY* NOT EXIST...

I DON'T BELIEVE IN SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION, NOR DO I BELIEVE IN ANY VOODOO MUMBO-JUMBO. RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, I *DO* BELIEVE THERE'S AN ORGANIZATION OUT THERE CALLED THE *LOA*. START LOOKING INTO IT, WALLER.

"AS HORRIBLE AS THAT MAN'S DEATH WAS, WHAT WAS WORSE IN MY EYES WAS AMANDA'S REACTION. ALL SHE CARED ABOUT WAS HER RECENT DEMOTION -- AND THAT SHE NO LONGER CONTROLLED THE SQUAD."

JOHN, TELL FLO TO START WORKING ON THIS *LOA* THING. HAVE HER PATCH INTO ORACLE AND SEE WHAT NEWS *THAT* ENTITY CAN FIND OUT.

GET AHOLD OF HOUSEKEEPING, MURPH, AND HAVE THEM CLEAN UP IN HERE.

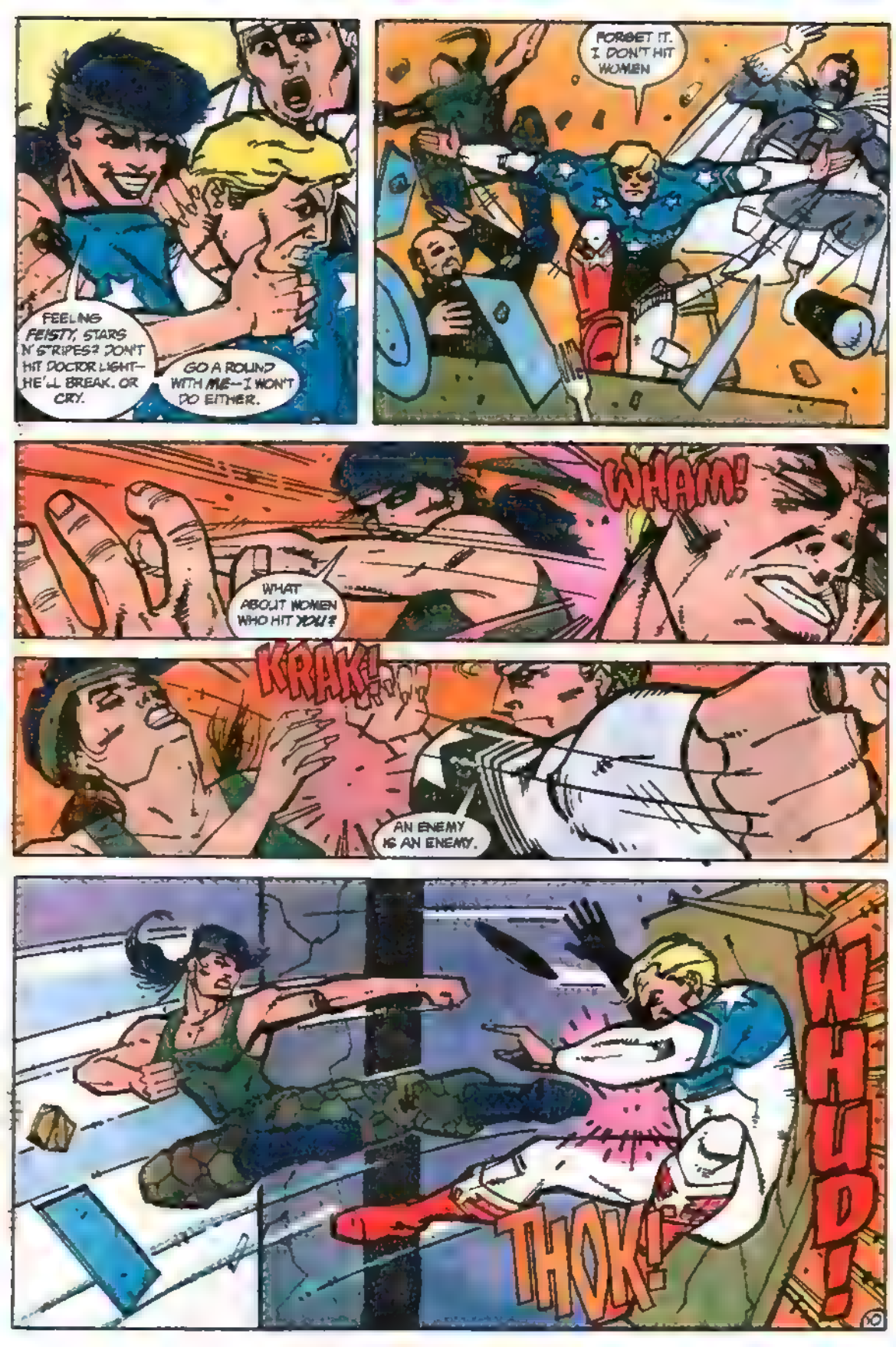
"BESIDES MY DUTIES AS CHAPLAIN, I'VE TAKEN ON THE INTERIM JOB OF COUNSELING WHILE A REPLACEMENT FOR SIMON LaGRIEVE IS FOUND. HE WAS A GOOD MAN; UNLIKE MANY PSYCHOLOGISTS HE RESPECTED RELIGION. WE GOT ALONG."
YOUR OLDEST SON, JIM, IS COMING TO VISIT FOR A FEW DAYS. ANY PROBLEMS?
JIMMY AND I HAVEN'T REALLY TALKED SINCE I CAME OUT AND MOVED OUT OF THE HOUSE. LAURA -- THAT'S MY EX -- SAYS JIMMY'S HAVING A HARD TIME DEALING WITH IT. PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL; STUFF LIKE THAT.
ANYWAY, THE IDEA IS THAT JIMMY STAYS OVER A FEW DAYS AND MAYBE THE TWO OF US THRASH IT ALL OUT.
WHOSE IDEA -- YOURS, JIMMY'S, OR YOUR EX-WIFE'S
OKAY, SO IT WAS LAURA'S. BUT I THINK IT'S A GOOD ONE!
DOES JIMMY WANT TO COME?
NO.

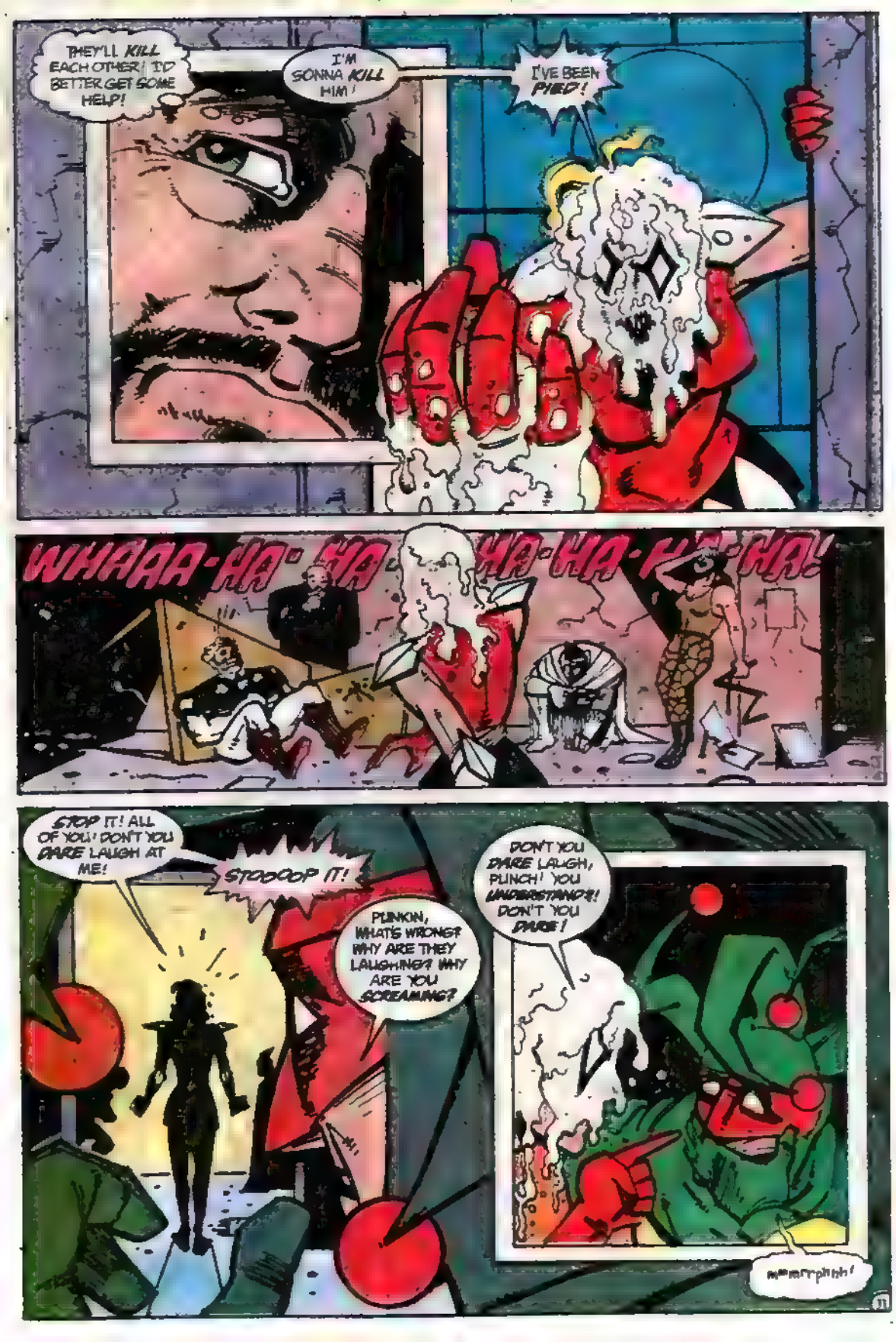
HE'S FOUGHT THIS TOOTH AND NAIL, FATHER. DOESN'T WANT TO COME, DOESN'T WANT TO SEE HIS OLD MAN, WON'T TALK TO HIM ON THE PHONE, DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR FROM THE OLD MAN.
DAMN IT, I'M STILL HIS FATHER! I GAVE HIM LIFE!
THE BOY IS SCARED --AND SO ARE YOU. THAT'S GOING TO BE A GIVEN, MITCH.
LOOK, IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO COME TO GRIPS WITH WHAT I AM. I HAVE AND I'M HAPPY WITH THAT. BUT HE'S MY KID! I DON'T WANT TO LOSE HIM!
THEN TELL HIM WHAT YOU JUST TOLD ME. IT'S HOW YOU REALLY FEEL. AND WHAT'S NEEDED RIGHT NOW IS THE TRUTH.
THAT'S A TWO-WAY STREET, FATHER. IF I'M HONEST WITH JIMMY, HE'LL BE HONEST WITH ME--AND I MIGHT NOT LIKE HEARING WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.
WHATEVER THE KID HAS TO SAY, SO LONG AS IT'S THE TRUTH, GIVES YOU SOMETHING TO WORK FROM, MITCH. SURE, IT'S A RISK-- BUT CONSIDER WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF YOU DON'T TRY.
YOU KNOW, YOU TALK GOOD ON YOUR FEET, FATHER.
OKAY. I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT.

"I PRAY EVERY DAY THAT OUR LEADERS MAY BE GIVEN WISDOM AND GUIDANCE. I SEE EVERY DAY LESS AND LESS INDICATION THAT MY PRAYERS HAVE BEEN HEARD. WITNESS THE CASE OF MAJOR VICTORY—FORMER LEADER OF THE FORCE OF JULY.

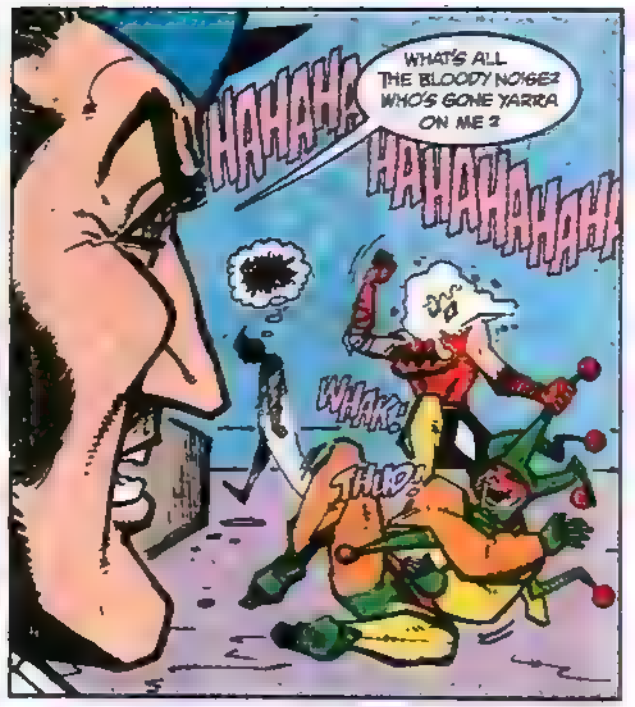
"THE FORCE WAS DECIMATED IN THE SQUAD'S BATTLE WITH KOBRA, IN PART BY THE SQUAD ITSELF. THE PRESIDENT, IN HIS WISDOM, HAS DECIDED TO ATTACH MAJOR VICTORY TO THE SQUAD, MAKING THE EVENTS TODAY IN THE WARDROOM INEVITABLE."

...HEALING BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS, MAJOR.


FEELING FEISTY, STARS N' STRIPES? DON'T HIT DOCTOR LIGHT—HE'LL BREAK. OR CRY.
GO A ROUND WITH ME—I WON'T DO EITHER.
FORGET IT. I DON'T HIT WOMEN
WHAM!
WHAT ABOUT WOMEN WHO HIT YOU?
KRAK!
AN ENEMY IS AN ENEMY.
WHUD!
THOK!
10

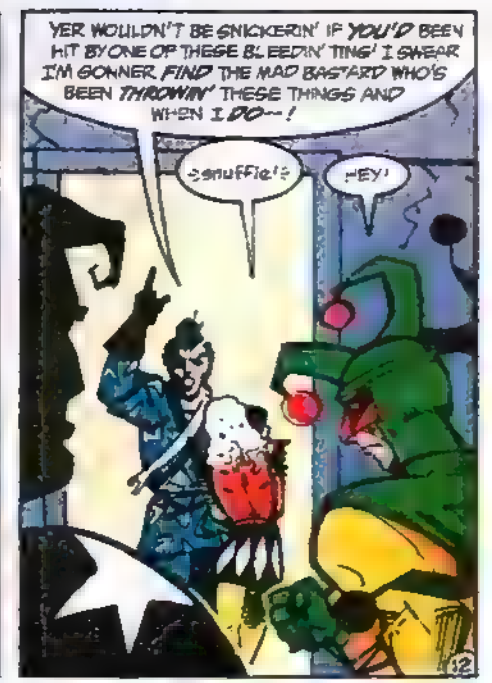

THEY'LL KILL EACH OTHER! I'D BETTER GET SOME HELP!
I'M GONNA KILL HIM!
I'VE BEEN PIED!
WHAAA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
STOP IT! ALL OF YOU! DON'T YOU DARE LAUGH AT ME!
STODOOP IT!
PUNKIN, WHAT'S WRONG? WHY ARE THEY LAUGHING? WHY ARE YOU SCREAMING?
DON'T YOU DARE LAUGH, PUNCH! YOU UNDERSTAND?! DON'T YOU DARE!
mmmrrpffffh!

I DON'T GET IT. IS THIS SOME SORT OF INITIATION?
IF IT IS, WHY HAVEN'T I GOTTEN ONE? DOESN'T ANYONE LIKE ME?
STOP LAUUUGHTING!


WHAT'S ALL THE BLOODY NOISE? WHO'S GONE YARRA ON ME?
HAHAHA
HAHAHAHAHA
WHAK!
THUD!

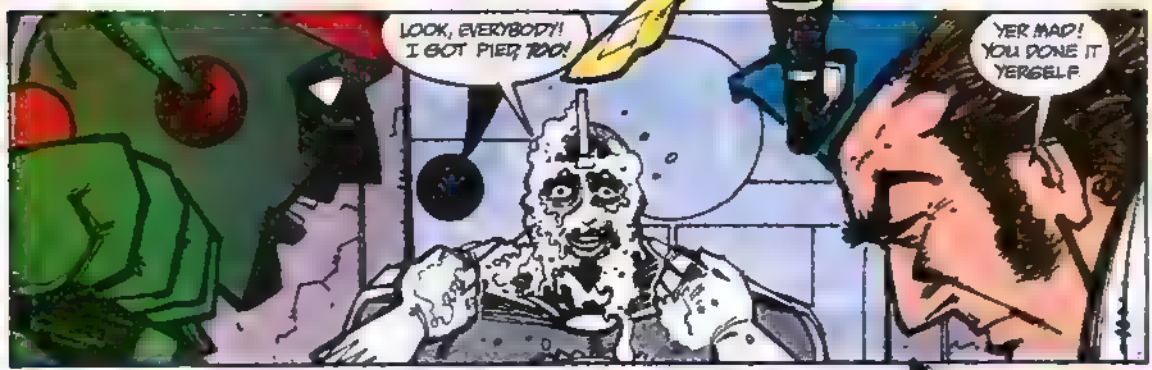
GO AHEAD! LAUGH! LAUGH! ;sniff; EVERYONE ELSE IS!
HAHAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHAHA

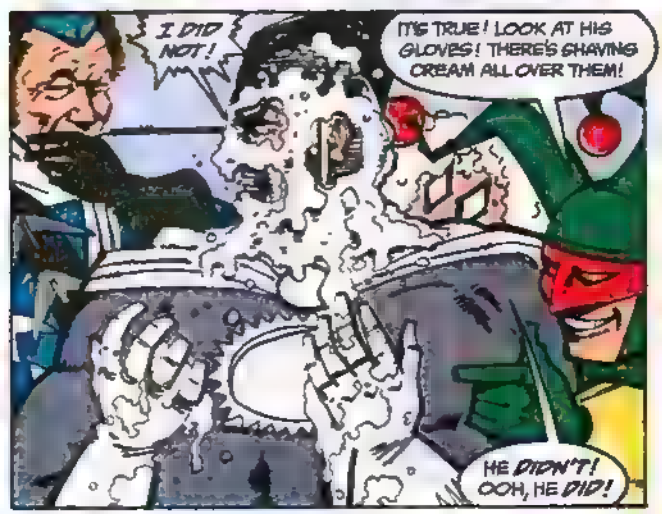
AHH, YOU POOR DARLIN'! THAT MAD BASTARD'S GOTTEN YOU, TOO, HAS HE?
;snuffff;
WIPE THOSE SMILES OFF YER BLEEDIN' GOBS! Y'MAKE ME MAGGOTTY, THE LOT O' YOU!


YER WOULDN'T BE SNICKERIN' IF YOU'D BEEN HIT BY ONE OF THESE BLEEDIN' THING! I SWEAR I'M GONNER FIND THE MAD BASTARD WHO'S BEEN THROWIN' THESE THINGS AND WHEN I DO--!
;snuffle;
HEY!

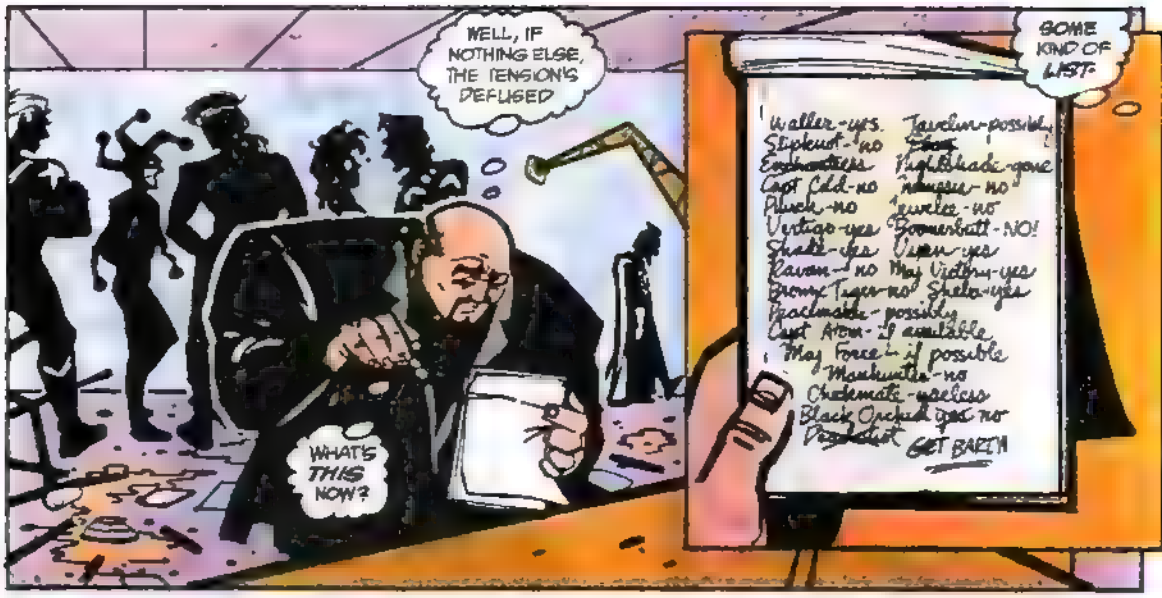
GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY WIFE!
PUSH OFF! IF YOU'D DO YER JOB BY THIS SWEET YOUNG THING, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO COMFORT HER, NOW WOULD I?

GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY WIFE!
EEK!
UGK!


LOOK, EVERYBODY! I GOT PIED, TOO!
YER MAD! YOU DONE IT YERSELF


I DID NOT!
IT'S TRUE! LOOK AT HIS GLOVES! THERE'S SHAVING CREAM ALL OVER THEM!
HE DIDN'T! OOH, HE DID!

NO! I WAS PIED! I REALLY WAS!
WHA-HA HOO-OO
HOO HEE
HEE-HEE
I WAS!
I WAS!


WELL, IF NOTHING ELSE, THE TENSION'S DEFUSED
WHAT'S THIS NOW?
SOME KIND OF LIST.
Waller-yes. Javelin-possible.
Stiletto-no
Nightshade-gone
Capt Cold-no
Plunk-no
Vertigo-yes
Shade-yes
Raven-no
May Victory-yes
Shelo-yes
Checkmate-possibly
Cpt Atom-if available
May Force-if possible
Manhunter-no
Checkmate-useless
Black Orchid-yes no
GET BACK!!

HM?
PRYING, PADRE?

IT--UHH--DROPPED TO THE FLOOR...I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS YOURS...
FORGET IT.

"MRS. WALLER HAS IMPLIED THERE'S MORE TO DUCHESS THAN MEETS THE EYE. THAT LIST FEELS OMINOUS. SOMEHOW WHO IS PLAYING GAMES WITH WHO HERE?"

"ONE OF THE PEOPLE I'M COUNSELING IS COUNT WERNER VERTIGO...

"VERTIGO'S HOMELAND HAS A RICH CATHOLIC TRADITION WHICH MAKES HIM PREDISPOSED TO CONFIDE IN ME. THE COUNT HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED AS A MANIC/DEPRESSIVE AND, IN OUR MOST RECENT SESSION, WAS MOST COGENT... IF A LITTLE LETHARGIC."

...THEN YOU ARE AWARE OF THE MOOD SWINGS.

YES.

MY FAMILY WAS ONE OF THE *LAST* OF THE GREAT ARISTOCRATIC FAMILIES OF EUROPE AND HAD A POSITIVE HORROR OF ANYTHING BUT BLUE BLOOD IN OUR LINEAGE.

SO MY ANCESTORS ASSIDUOUSLY BRED WITHIN AN EVER DECREASING NUMBER OF PEOPLE...

...LEAVING ME TO REAP THE JOYS OF DEDICATED INBREEDING. I SUPPOSE I AM FORTUNATE NOT TO DROOL—AT LEAST, NOT INDISCREETLY.

THIS IS AN OLD, WELL-WORN PATH.

I NOW FIND MYSELF GRIPPED BY AN INCREASING LETHARGY, WHICH WILL SPIRAL INTO DESPAIR. THAT, IF I DO NOT KILL MYSELF, WILL GIVE WAY GRADUALLY TO MANIA, WHERE, IF I DO NOT KILL SOMEONE ELSE, I WILL BEGIN THE SLIDE TOWARDS DESPAIR AGAIN.

CAN'T MEDICATIONS HELP?

DRUG THERAPY, HYPNO THERAPY—I'VE TRIED THEM ALL. THEY WORK FOR A WHILE AND THEN—phht.

IN MY LUCID MOMENTS, I WISH I COULD BE HEALTHY, DEPRESSED, I AM A DANGER TO MYSELF, MANIC—I AM A DANGER TO EVERYONE ELSE.

I DO NOT WISH TO KILL MYSELF BUT I MIGHT NOT MIND DYING.

PERHAPS *NOW* YOU CAN SEE THE ATTRACTION THAT SOMETHING THAT CALLS ITSELF THE *SUICIDE SQUAD* MIGHT HAVE FOR ME.

I AM TIRED OF BEING TIRED, FATHER—I WISH TO BE WELL OR DEAD.

"COUNT VERTIGO WASN'T THE ONLY PERSON CONFIDING IN ME TODAY. MARY WHITE ASKED ME TO DROP BY THE INFIRMARY.
"MARY IS AMANDA'S OLDER SISTER AND IN CHARGE OF BELLE REVE'S MEDICAL FACILITIES SINCE THE DEATH OF KARIN GRACE."
CARE FOR SOME, REVEREND?... PASTOR? ...JUST WHAT DO I CALL YOU, ANYWAY?
FATHER CRAEMER OR FATHER. I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO ANSWER TO "HEY, YOU!"
AND I DRINK MY TEA STRAIGHT, THANKS
I ASKED TO SEE YOU, FATHER. I'M WORRIED ABOUT AMANDA
I DON'T USUALLY TALK TO ROUND COLLARS--I WAS RAISED BAPTIST--BUT I KNOW YOU'RE A GOOD MAN AND A GOOD COUNSELOR
MY BABY SISTER'S TAKING TOO MUCH ON HERSELF AND KEEPING IT TOO FAR INSIDE, ITS GONNA KILL HER

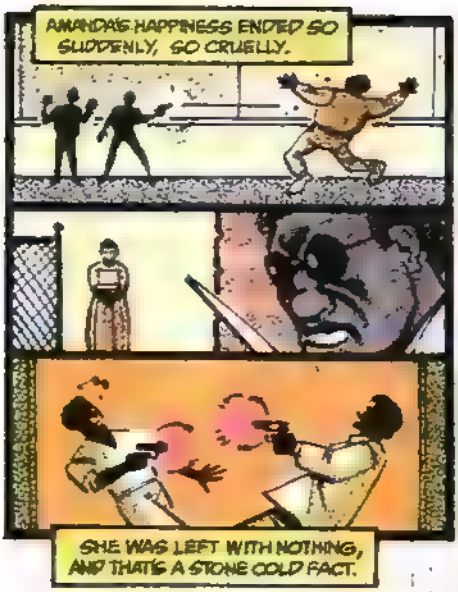
LOOK AT THIS PICTURE, FATHER. THAT'S ME WITH AMANDA. LOOK AT THAT SMILE, SEE HER EYES TWINKLING LIKE STARDUST. KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKIN' -- WHERE DID THAT HAPPY CHILD GO?

AMANDA DECIDED AT AN EARLY AGE THAT UNLESS YOU COULD MAKE HER DO SOMETHING, SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO DO IT. AND SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO LISTEN, NEITHER.

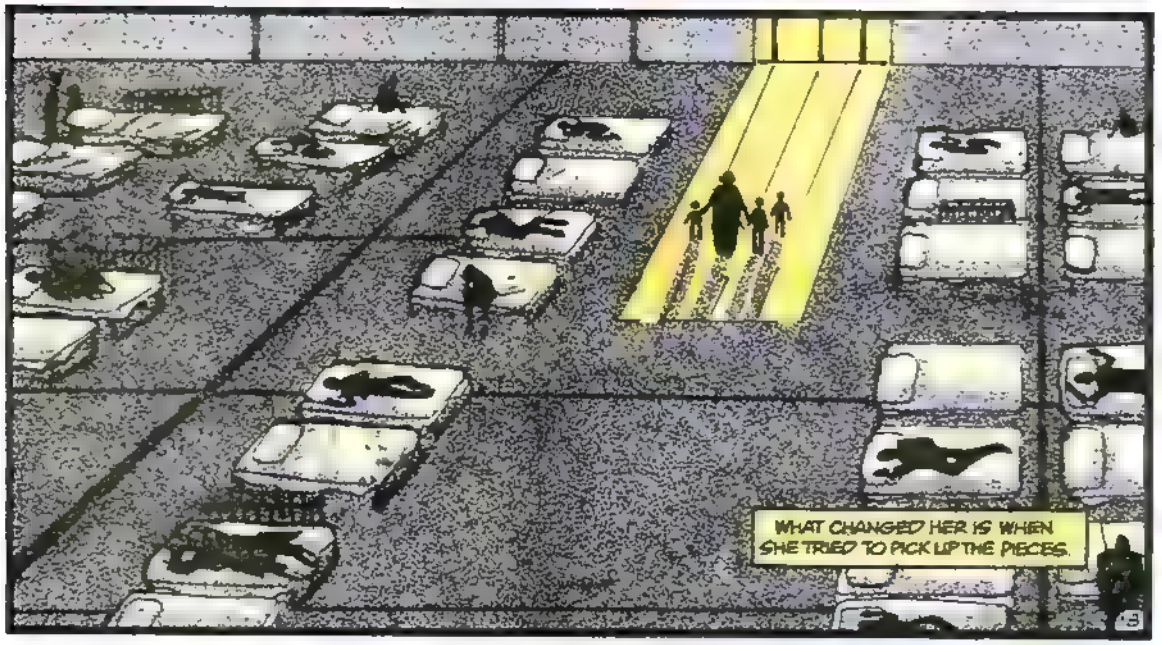
I LEARNED A LESSON OUR FOLKS NEVER DID.
YOU DON'T FIGHT AMANDA; YOU JUST GIVE HER A TASTE OF HER OWN MEDICINE. SHE DON'T LIKE THAT MUCH

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, FATHER, SHE WAS ACTUALLY A SWEET THING, RIGHT UP THROUGH HER MARRIAGE.

I GOT ANOTHER PICTURE TO SHOW YOU... AMANDA'S FAMILY. THREE DEAD; THREE STILL ALIVE. THAT'S CORETTA. GIRL CHANGED HER NAME TO SEREETHA WHEN SHE STARTED MODELING; SHE SAID SHE WASN'T GOING TO LIVE BY NO 'SLAVE NAME'.
STILL 'CORETTA' TO ME, THOUGH.


AMANDA'S HAPPINESS ENDED SO SUDDENLY, SO CRUELLY.
SHE WAS LEFT WITH NOTHING, AND THAT'S A STONE COLD FACT.

EVEN WHEN SHE GOT EVICTED, SHE KEPT A GOOD PROUD, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.


WHAT CHANGED HER IS WHEN SHE TRIED TO PICK UP THE PIECES.

SHE WOUND UP HAVING TO SWALLOW A LOT OF THAT PRIDE. HAD TO GO ON THE WELFARE TO HELP KEEP HER BABIES ALIVE THAT BURNED HER DEEP, I'M TELLING YOU.

THE WELFARE ISN'T FREE MONEY, REVEREND--NO MATTER *WHAT* THEY TELL YOU IT COSTS YOU YOUR *PRIDE*, YOUR *DIGNITY*. SHE'D BE LECTURED BY WHITE FOLKS WHO HATED THEIR JOBS--JOBS AMANDA'D HAVE TAKEN IN A SECOND AND BEEN *GLAD* TO HAVE.

I FINALLY FOUND HER AND OFFERED TO TAKE HER AND HER KIDS IN, THOUGH LORD KNOWS I HAD LITTLE ENOUGH AS IT WAS. AMANDA WOULD HAVE *NONE* OF IT

NO!

I AM *NOT* TAKING NO MORE CHARITY--NOT FROM KIN, NOT FROM FRIENDS, AND ESPECIALLY NOT FROM NO DAMN GOVERNMENT!

THE TASTE OF IT ROTS IN MY MOUTH!

I'M GONNA GET ME *POWER* OVER MY OWN LIFE! AND *HEAVEN HELP* THE ONE WHO TRIES TO *TAKE* THAT POWER FROM ME!

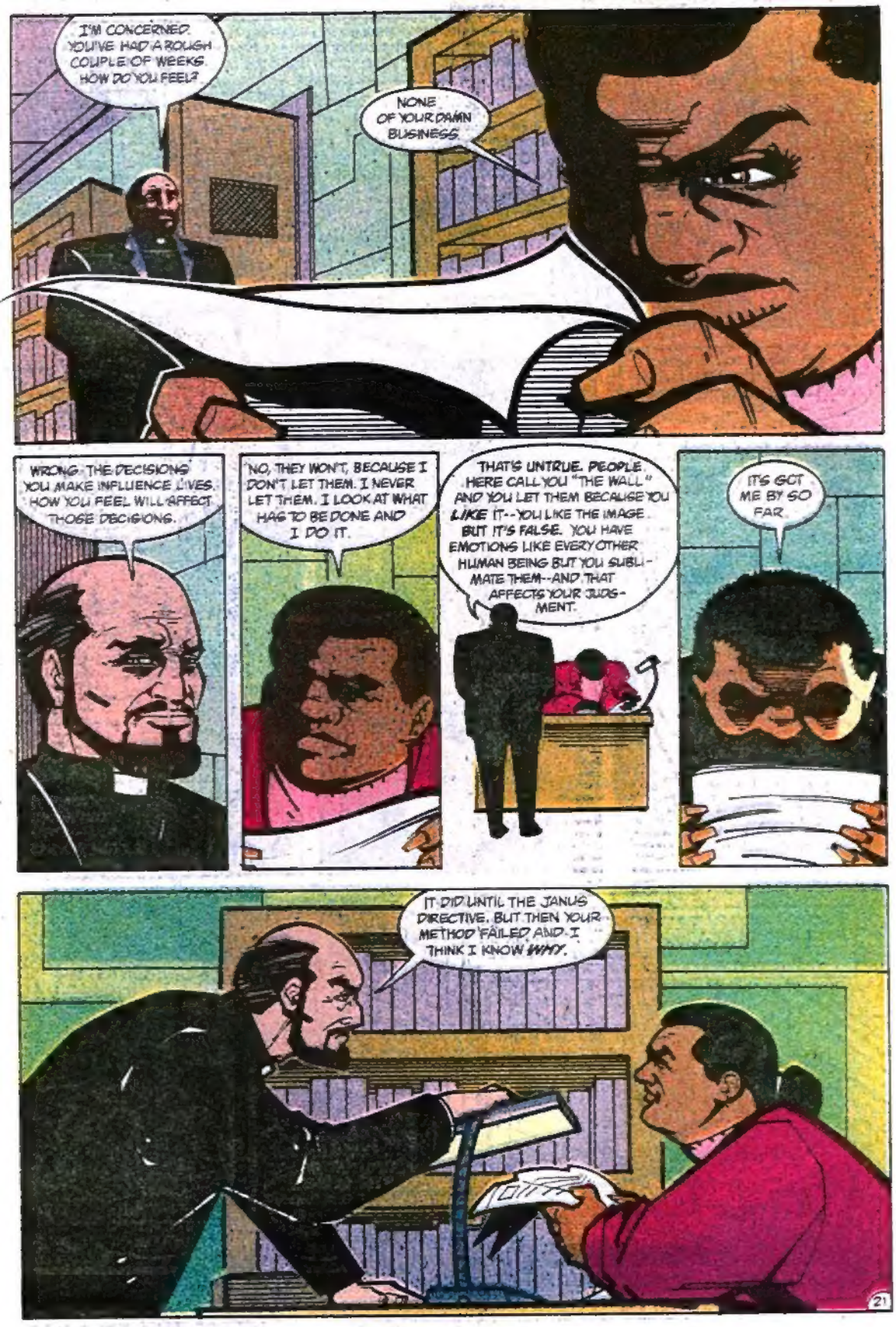
AMANDA'S TOUGHNESS HAS TAKEN HER A LONG WAY.

IT'S TAKEN HER AS FAR AS IT CAN.

BUT IT CAN'T TAKE HER NO FURTHER. IT'S ACTUALLY STARTING TO DRAG HER DOWN.

I'M *SCARED* FOR MY BABY SISTER, REV--SCARED THAT THE ANGER IN HER IS CONGEALING INTO *HATE*. THAT HATE WILL *KILL* HER, YOU MARK MY WORDS!

"I AGREED TO TALK TO AMANDA. THE PROBLEM WOULD BE IN GETTING AMANDA TO LISTEN.
"SOME THINGS YOU HAVE TO TRY--EVEN IF BEFOREHAND YOU'RE PRETTY SURE ITS FUTILE."
SPLOOT!
OH GOD! I'VE BEEN PWNED--FOR REAL !!!
NO! NO, YOU DON'T SEE! NO ONE WILL BELIEVE I DIDN'T DO IT MYSELF! THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE WORSE--ITS HUMILIATING!!!
SO I SEE.
THERE IS JUST NO PLEASING SOME PEOPLE.
KNOCK KNOCK
MRS. WALLER? MIND IF I TALK TO YOU FOR A MOMENT?
I GOT WORK TO DO. WHAT DO YOU WANT, PADRE?
20


I'M CONCERNED. YOU'VE HAD A ROUGH COUPLE OF WEEKS. HOW DO YOU FEEL?
NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS.
WRONG. THE DECISIONS YOU MAKE INFLUENCE LIVES. HOW YOU FEEL WILL AFFECT THOSE DECISIONS.
NO, THEY WON'T, BECAUSE I DON'T LET THEM. I NEVER LET THEM. I LOOK AT WHAT HAS TO BE DONE AND I DO IT.
THAT'S UNTRUE. PEOPLE HERE CALL YOU "THE WALL" AND YOU LET THEM BECAUSE YOU LIKE IT--YOU LIKE THE IMAGE. BUT IT'S FALSE. YOU HAVE EMOTIONS LIKE EVERY OTHER HUMAN BEING BUT YOU SUBLIMATE THEM--AND THAT AFFECTS YOUR JUDGMENT.
IT'S GOT ME BY SO FAR.
IT DID UNTIL THE JANUS DIRECTIVE. BUT THEN YOUR METHOD FAILED, AND I THINK I KNOW WHY.

YOU SYSTEMATICALLY SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO WILL ACT AS A NATURAL CHECK AND BALANCE TO YOU-- LaGRIEVE DID IT, NIGHTSHADE DID IT, FLAG DID IT, AND SO DOES YOUR SISTER.
YOU COUNT ON THEM TO KEEP YOU HONEST--TO REIN IN YOUR NASTIER SIDE.
BY THE TIME THE JANUS DIRECTIVE CAME AROUND, MOST OF THEM WERE GONE. YOU WERE EMOTIONALLY ON YOUR OWN -- AND YOU MADE SOME BAD CALLS.
AND YOU KNOW IT.
SO-- WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW? SURROUND YOURSELF AGAIN WITH PEOPLE WHO'LL PUT THE BRAKES ON YOU...
...OR LEARN TO PUT THE BRAKES ON YOURSELF?
I'LL THINK ON IT SOME. NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND, PADRE-- I AM HIP DEEP IN PAPERWORK AND I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SOME OF IT DONE BEFORE JUDGMENT DAY.
"PERHAPS I'M REQUIRED BY MY JOB TO BE AN OPTIMIST, BUT I THINK SHE WILL THINK ON IT SOME. I'LL CHOOSE TO BELIEVE THAT FOR NOW. WE MUST TAKE OUR SMALL VICTORIES WHERE WE CAN GET THEM.
"AND JUST MAYBE THIS MISSION ISN'T SUCH A FAILURE AFTER ALL."
NEXT: FATAL RESCUE

SUICIDE NOTES

DC COMICS INC.
666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103

JENETTE KAHN President and Publisher
DICK GIORDANO V.P.–Executive Editor
ROBERT GREENBERGER Editor
RICHARD BRUNING Art Director
TERRI CUNNINGHAM Mgr.–Editorial Admin.
PAT BASTIENNE Mgr.–Editorial Coordinator
BOB ROZAKIS Production Director
PAUL LEVITZ Executive V.P.
JOE ORLANDO V.P.–Creative Director
BRUCE BRISTOW V.P.–Sales & Marketing
MATT RAGONE Circulation Director
PAT CALDON Controller

L-3742

Whew! Back to monthly business. Let's see, where are we? *The Janus Directive* is over and as I write this, a day before the start of the baseball season, we have three chapters out and so far early word is encouraging. Which is fine, because as it happens, that four-parter has turned out to be my last major mission with the Squad.

And this, alas, is the last hands-on issue where I will be the editor. Beginning in April I have assumed the title and responsibilities of the Editorial Coordinator and that means I have to give up my current slate of titles, including this, my baby. When the title became available, however, Dan Raspler stepped in to volunteer. He loves the series and feels he can make a significant contribution. He has been conferring with John and Kim, refining the direction of the series and the stories I put into motion and coming up with ideas of his own. It'll be a few months until his influence is keenly felt, around #36 if all goes well, so give the guy a chance.

But you won't be rid of me entirely. No sir. Dan has asked me to stay on and handle these pages so we will continue to chat on a regular basis, which is fine by me. And now, on to issue #25:

Dear Squad Leaders,

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

—John 15:13

These words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ are a fitting epitaph to the passing of Shrike in issue #25.

I read this issue last night and went over it again this afternoon to reabsorb the story before commenting.

Being an ordained minister, I have learned of the variety of successes and failures both reported and unreported that many ministers have experienced.

Shrike's unfortunate experience with the Reverend Flint Yuma is a reflection of what has probably happened numerous times in history; but for each minister who betrays a woman as Shrike was, there are dozens upon multiplied dozens who conduct themselves honorably and professionally.

The outcome of the reaction to the attempted rape resulted in the deaths of 33 recorded persons, thus emphasizing the perilous repercussions of a repeat performance that could potentially wipe out the Suicide Squad itself if Shrike were subjected to any form of stressful hysteria-invoking situation while on a mission.

Father Craemer's response on page 8 panel 2 to Shrike's innocent-like faith in the Lord placing her in the Squad was both humorous as well as serving to amplify the potential danger to having her in the Squad. Her demise on pages 18 and 19 not only solved this potential problem, but also tastefully depicted her death in sacrificing herself for others, as did her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for putting this tortured soul to rest. Were this a real life story I would expect to meet Shrike in heaven when I go to my reward.

I liked the way she gave her life freely so the Sister Agnes Martinon could carry on God's work in Ogaden—a realistic portrayal of someone who really loves the Lord Jesus Christ, doing what he said in John 15:13.

While Shrike's death was believable, some of the rest of the storyline seemed a bit rushed. Specifically, the hearings sequence could have been stretched out over another issue or two. It was a great twist to open the story with a video replay of the event being run at Checkmate headquarters.

The Wall has indeed set herself up for a fall as noted on page 3 panel 5. That was a great performance on page 4, panel 2, plus page 5, panel 3 regarding the new boss, J. Danfield Kale. Boomerang's response was great.

Waller's best shot was a classic as Nightshade's identity was revealed to Senator Eden. Her response was quite in character and I expect her to return with a vengeance. The cover made me dig right into this issue. I knew Duchess was out of place on the cover.

Daryl Holloman
PO Box 3505
Jasper, AL 35502-3505

*****

Dear Bob and Suiciders,

Am I the only one to mourn Shrike's passing? Even though I knew since last issue that she'd be the one to bite it, I still wish the Lord would've taken that irritating Punch instead. Religious characters are few and far between in comics, whether they are sincere but fanatical like Shrike, or sincere and dedicated like Father Craemer, Sister Martinon or Eve Eden. (I loved the scene on page 15 with Nightshade's rescue of the sister. This gives a whole new meaning to the words, "Angel of Darkness.") In the brief time that we readers got to know this weird character, I thought Shrike was interesting enough for her tragic life and death to be quite touching, a good sign of the excellent writing to be found in this book.

Last issue Amanda was up against a wall herself, so I almost jumped up and cheered when she came through the congressional hearing with flying colors! Applause, applause! You've got your third year off to an explosive start, and you ain't even stopped for gas! The Duchess was also lookin' good this issue, and I'd love to see Nightshade in her own mini-series (that goes for the Bronze Tiger-Vixen team, too). The rest of the cast, the villains, is the most colorful one in this book yet. Their attempted mutiny makes the reader wonder if this could happen again. Thankfully, the cover was only a fantasy. In spite of that, it was great to see the team pull off a successful mission and rescue the sister, when I remember the loss of Zoya Trigorin back in Russia.

I miss Luke McDonnell, but Karl Kesel's inks on Grant Miehm's breakdowns were eye-opening! I'm still finding wonderful little details on the pages of "Sea of Troubles." If this is a sign of good things to come, I'm with you.

Neil Ahlquist
1100 Washington St. NE Apt. #2
Minneapolis, MN 55413

It's time for another update of what's going on with the cast outside of this book, so you can look forward to fun times. A Nightshade mini has been under discussion since we decided to have her quit. All we're waiting for now is the written proposal from Kim Yale and then we'll be off and running. Vixen was recently in ANIMAL MAN #10-12 and a Bronze Tiger Secret Origin is in the works for later this year, written by yours truly.

*****

Dear Bob,

Although this has always been one of my favorite books, the last few issues have not been as good as the earlier ones. That's mostly because John is such a good writer that the characters he wrote took on a person-

ality of their own and began to move off in their own directions. The "team" fell apart and became a group of individuals.

Now John has a new team to play with and I'm sure the same thing will happen. John will get us into their heads and before long the characters will do what *they* want and not what John wants. He's chosen some fascinating people for this new team. They are all so interesting that it's become impossible to pick a favorite.

I'm glad that you decided to knock off Shrike, though. I don't think a "religious" criminal character would work well with this group.

Bob Felber
60 Ruskin Avenue
Woonsocket, RI 02895

With Shrike dying and Nightshade quitting in the same issue, you might say that the Squad has lost its soul. And as we see this issue, Father Croemer is trying to find a shred of soul to build upon.

*****

Hey, Bob,

SUICIDE SQUAD was the best issue to date of this always excellent title.

O's writing was even better this time around than it usually is, and that's saying quite a lot. I think The Wall made the only possible right choice when she told Senator Eden that his daughter was associated with her group. I also thought bringing in J. Danfield Kale as the new figurehead was an excellent ploy. And since Nightshade is now an ex-member of the Squad, is there any chance of her receiving an Ostrander or Ostrander/Yale mini-series?

As far as the artwork goes, the word that immediately springs to mind is "stunning."

I have seen Grant Miehm's artwork elsewhere and, while nice, it never looks as intricate nor as polished as it did this issue. I suppose we have Karl Kesel to thank for the striking finished interior visuals, as well as the stunning cover of his this time around.

So thank you, Karl, for all your excellent work. And, if it means anything at all to you, I think you're the absolute *best* inker in the industry.

Uncle Elvis
17650 Dawson Road
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

*****

Dear Bob,

Well, all right! I've been waiting for two years for someone to stick it to Amanda Waller, and at last, it's happened! As much as I value her character's complexity, this is a woman who is way out of control. Her cold-blooded, reckless manipulation of Flag and Deadshot was absolutely unforgivable, and her "ends justifies the means" mentality has lost any resonance of sympathy her tragic past once gave it. While I realize she's an integral part of this book and is likely to be around for quite a while, I also feel her recent descent into outright villainy demanded a moral response of some sort. I'm glad you chose Nemesis to kick harsh, beautiful truth into Waller's gut, as he's been jerked around quite a bit by Waller and his nobility is an example she and other Squad members should aspire to. Their confrontation was positively electric—resolute, self-assured, and mad as hell. Don't lose track of Nemesis. While his resignation from the Squad is a logical development, I'd hate to lose such a great character. This looks to be the seed of a long-standing, possibly violent blood feud between him and Waller. Good show.

The new line-up looks interesting. Dr. Light's brown-nosing Waller was hilarious, and Punch and Jewelee appear to be insufferable irritants, which means they're perfectly suited to the Squad. Count Vertigo didn't get much panel-time, aside from several "in flight" poses, but his manic depressive personality should clash well with the various psychoses and neuroses of the other members. Tiger's ominous warning to Ravan seemed genuine. The Squad really does mean something to Ben, and he doesn't want anything or anyone to harm it. Despite this, I look for him and Ravan to eventually become quite close. This Oracle is a puzzle. I've a feeling Waller's "solution" will backfire, possibly resulting in yet another powerful thorn in her side.

New member suggestions: Creeper, Man-Bat, Ragman, Spook, Black Spider, Scarecrow, Gargoyle.

Michael J. Miller
513 Monroe Street
Hanover, IL 61041

*****

Dear Robert,

The new cast has certainly shown itself to be more volatile than the last one. In "Sea of Troubles," the dangers of the mission were almost exceeded by the treachery within the team. I hope this uncertainty and lack of communal trust is played up in future issues. The previous cast was more united, and reliance and back-up were taken for granted in most cases. Now, more of the team members are selfish, vile, and "out for number one." The Bronze Tiger, Vixen, and Shade are in for rougher times, and I expect they will find ways to cope with this situation. Count Vertigo makes a great sleazy character, and I would like to see him and Captain Boomerang "buddy up" and cause a commotion within the Squad.

Nightshade's resignation was long overdue but sad nonetheless. She was one of the few members with a conscience, and her presence and goodness will be missed. I hope Vixen can take over as the voice of reason and morality. The Duchess subplot has been too long on the back burner and I hope to see it resolved or continued very soon. *The Janus Directive* sounds intriguing indeed, and this issue insinuates that Amanda is not the woman she seems to be these days. If she really is an imposter, the Squad is in for a really rough time and I for one can't wait to see how they handle a bogus Amanda Waller.

Jim Kelly
20 Randall Avenue Apt. 1W
Freeport, NY 11520

*****

Dear Squad,

Issue #25 was the best issue the Squad has produced. The art was fantastic. I strongly recommend keeping Mr. Miehm as the regular penciller; he really is great. The action scenes were also wonderfully done. The destruction and the Shrike's death were the strong points of the story and were handled with total professionalism, as well as the story itself. The only little complaint was not seeing Punch and Jewelee use their powers. I really like the characters, but I wish they had used their powers. I also hope you bring back Nightshade; she was my favorite Squad member and her powers were a great asset to the team.

Possible guest stars could include Black Guard, Jinx, and Silver Shade. You might want to include another hero since I doubt that Vixen and Bronze Tiger could handle the villains alone, should they try to break free again. How about Katana or bringing back Black Orchid full time?

Matthew Zugel
36545 Saxony
Farmington, MI 48024

*****

COMING ATTRACTIONS

An important diplomat is aboard a plane that has crashlanded in the Mideast. He has to be brought out alive and in relative secrecy. Who to call in? That's Sarge Steel's dilemma as he chooses to send in the new Squad, led by the Bronze Tiger and Major Victory. It looks like a cut and dried case, which means it will go anything but smoothly. Meantime, Duchess makes her move as we get her storyline off the ground at long last, and some more with the rest of the cast. John, Kim, and returning guest-penciller Grant Miehm have been having a ball together so far and we think it shows. Do let us know what you think.

And meantime, fans of Grant Miehm's work can look for his pencils every month in MANHUNTER where he became the regular penciller with issue #15, just three weeks ago. That book is going to look terrific.

So, drop us a line with your thoughts on the current structure and until then, root for the Mets, welcome the summer, and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger